

FireFighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union www.fbu.org.uk

April 2006



RETAINED PENSIONS

60 YEARS ON THE ROAD TO VICTORY

Law Lords rule RDS firefighters do same work as whotetime colleagues



Attacks

Major FBU success as legislation progresses



**In the
twilight zone**
One member's battle
with mental illness

No choice

FBU joins
global
campaign



Pensions, CPD and controls



As we go to press members around the country are discussing the issue of pensions and by the time you read this our recall conference will have met to make a decision on possible strike action. This is a very difficult question for members to consider. A strike is something nobody in the Fire Service wants. Unfortunately all too often it appears that the threat of strike action is needed even to get people to consider our views seriously. Whatever happens at the Conference the Union will continue to campaign on the issue of pensions. FBU members have the right to decent ill-health pensions. We will continue to pursue a single scheme for firefighters and emergency fire control staff. We will also continue to campaign against the proposed new retirement age of 60 for new entrants to the Service. It is our view that there is no professional justification for this and it should be withdrawn. We may also face strike action by colleagues in the Local Government Pension Scheme and I hope that our members around the country will give full support to their campaign.

Continuous Professional Development

In recent weeks, I have had a number of queries regarding the proposed payment for Continuous Professional Development. This should be introduced in time to replace long service pay. This has proved

to be one of the most controversial aspects of the 2003 Pay and Conditions Agreement and I am fully aware of members' concerns about this. Discussions with the Employers are planned over the next few weeks. The Union has commissioned research to support our case. Our message to the Employers is that they must honour their side of the bargain. I will ensure that members are kept fully informed on this important issue.

Resilience controls

Some weeks ago the Union launched our document on Resilience Controls. This provides a well researched and well thought out alternative to the ODPM proposals for Regionalisation of Fire Controls. Around the country local officials are considering local launches and raising our issues with Chief Fire Officers and Fire and Rescue Authorities. We hope that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will now start to listen to this alternative view which is receiving a growing echo throughout the Service.

European solidarity

Finally you may be interested to know that the Union is currently involved in a project to bring together firefighters from across various European countries. European legislation and European Union structures mean that Firefighters across Europe face the same issues. It is essential that the voice of Firefighters is heard. Again, I will keep you informed about this issue.

Matt Wrack





The FBU has won a major legal victory for the pension rights of firefighters working the retained duty system – pictured here in the Isle of Wight
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WILLIAM RAYNER

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PUZZLES

Take part in our prize quiz and win a Vivitar Minicam 4.0. This month test your film knowledge and you could win the opportunity to make digital movies yourself, take 4 megapixel stills and use the amazing Minicam as an MP3 player



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News

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Big rise in fire damage claims

Union says warnings have proved correct as claims top £1 billion for the first time



Firefighters at the scene of a May 2004 blaze in Leyton, East London, where work by some of Britain's leading modern artists worth millions of pounds was destroyed

SERVICE CUTS

The FBU is deeply worried by the sharp rise in business fire claims. They have topped £1 billion for the first time, according to the Association of British Insurers.

The Union said the figures showed its warnings that fire and rescue service cutbacks and changes would push up fire losses should have been heeded.

Insurers paid out £790 million in 2005 in commercial fire damage claims, a rise of 60%. There was an additional £220 million in business interruption claims as a result of fires.

The sharp rise coincides with the end of national response standards for the fire and rescue service in favour of locally

The sharp rise coincides with the end of national response standards

based fire and rescue emergency response plans. The FBU has called for a rapid re-shaping of national policy and an end to fire and rescue service cuts.

Assistant General Secretary Andy Dark said: "Business is now left counting the cost of these Government reforms.

"Our members are very proud of rescuing record numbers of people and saving lives, but we are now seeing a sharp rise in economic losses which often lead to a loss of livelihoods.

"There must be a much wider appreciation of the value for money the fire and rescue service can provide and a move away from the narrow approach taken by Government and the Audit Commission. That needs a radical re-think in the Government's approach."

Sounding off!

JOHN DRAKE

Regional official, FBU South West

Say No! to the BNP on May 4

We have had mixed success in getting fire and rescue services to issue statements effectively banning BNP members from spreading their filth in the workplace. Gloucestershire and Avon have made public their commitment to this worthy cause, whereas Dorset Fire Authority threw out their CFOs plan to follow suit.

The police and the prison service have made clear there is no room for BNP members in their service. Why should the fire service give safe haven to members of a party some of whom have been convicted for carrying out bombings, arson and racially motivated attacks?

Those are not political statements or a discussion of political ideas. It is open



GUY SMALLMAN

thuggery and it cannot be condoned. We don't want our service sullied in the way some other public services – such as the police and prison services – have been debased by tolerating these people within their ranks.

In the South West we are well aware of the threat of the BNP to the well-being of our communities and the effect their hateful campaigns bring to our streets. The local elections to be held 4 May this year will, once again, see the BNP and other far right organisations getting their thugs to ditch the bomber jacket and the combat boot in favour of a shirt and tie. Once again they will attempt to veneer over the fact that the roots of the BNP are embedded in hate and violence.

Over 500 delegates at the national Unite against Fascism conference that I recently attended heard from the sister of Anthony Walker, the young man viciously murdered in a racist attack in Liverpool last year. His sister, Dominique, spoke with great dignity about her brother and how racist murderers had devastated her family by taking away her brother.

The message from the conference was that by working together with other groups within the community the BNP can be defeated by tackling them head on and exposing their lies. The FBU has a definite role to play in this battle.

The FBU have been successful in previous campaigns especially in Brockenhurst and North Staffordshire. Now is not the time to do nothing.

For more information, visit www.uaf.org.uk

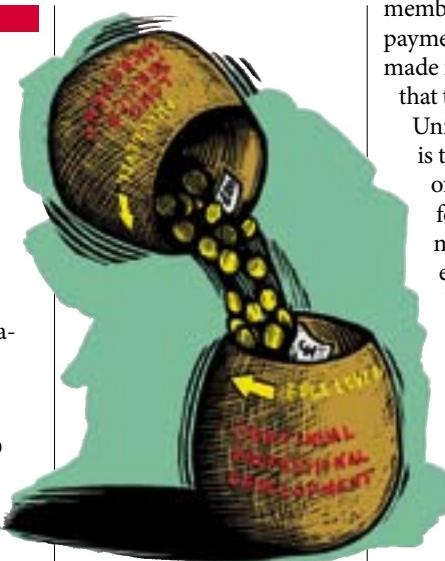
We expect to get from CPD what we lose in LSI, FBU warns employers

CPD PAYMENTS

Negotiations over continuous professional development (CPD) payments will be completed ahead of the planned implementation date of 1 July in time for the FBU to consider whether the outcome of those negotiations is acceptable to members.

Arrangements for putting in place the CPD payments, which are to replace the long service increment (LSI) under the June 2003 pay agreement, have been discussed at meetings between the FBU and employers at the National Joint Council (NJC).

CPD payments will be outside the IPDS-based pay structure and the arrangements for additional responsibility allowances.



The union says: "The all-important questions for members are 'how and when do I get it?' and 'how much will it be?'

"We look forward to hearing the employers' proposals on the mechanism which will allow

members to attract the CPD payment. The FBU has made its position quite clear that the expectation of this Union and its members is that the amount of money available for distribution to members should be equal to that which is being surrendered by members with the ending of LSI.

"We are putting members on notice that the employers have a different interpretation as to what was agreed.

"The FBU is cognisant of the relevant legislation and case law and will be submitting proposals which are appropriate, fit for purpose, justifiable and will assist in promoting industrial harmony in the fire service by meeting the expectations of our members."

MP's new school sprinklers drive

FIRE SAFETY

A campaign to secure support from MPs and Government for mandatory water sprinklers in schools has been launched by FBU Parliamentary Support Group MP Celia Barlow (Hove).

She has put down an early day motion that notes that "more than 2,000 schools are damaged by fire each year at an estimated cost of £100 million to local education authorities". It calls on the Government to broaden its recommendations to make mandatory the installation of sprinklers in all new build and major refurbishments of maintained school.

The move came as new figures – revealed to MPs in response to parliamentary questions – showed that 60% of school fires are down to arson.

Around 2,000 schools burn each year, a rate that almost outpaces the number of new schools being built. This destruction costs £100 million a year, figures from insurers show. The Fire Sprinkler Association has



Around 2,000 schools burn every year

shown that sprinklers cut injuries by at least 80 per cent and property damage by 90 per cent.

During an debate on fire safety in early March, Celia Barlow told MPs and the fire minister Jim Fitzpatrick that there was strong support for sprinklers to be made compulsory in new or refurbished schools.

→ Write to your MP asking them to sign EDM 1726 – Water sprinklers in Schools. Visit www.fbu.org.uk and follow the Lobby Your MP link.



Drinks and canapés? We'd rather have our jobs

HERTS CUTS

Buncefield firefighters demonstrated outside a Downing Street reception on 1 March to protest at sweeping cuts to the Hertfordshire fire service. The proposals include the loss of 50 frontline firefighters, the closure of two stations and the loss of specialist rescue equipment.

All of the losses will be of firefighters and equipment at stations which were the first to respond to the fire at Buncefield. The firefighters say the losses will affect the

whole of Hertfordshire and cut the response capability to all emergencies.

Hertfordshire FBU Vice Chair, Tony Smith said: "We have no criticism of our colleagues who feel pressured to attend this reception, but we take exception to national and local politicians basking in the success of our hard work one minute and sacking us the next."

"Buncefield was the fourth major incident in Hertfordshire in recent years. We had previously dealt with major rail crashes at Watford Junction, Potters Bar and Hatfield and

the level of other emergency incidents has not diminished.

"Firefighters at Buncefield knew stations were earmarked for closure and that jobs were under threat, but we did our duty. We are not prepared to quietly stand in line to be told well done only to be stabbed in the back days later."

"There is nothing to celebrate in Downing Street when the shadow of significant cuts hangs over our fire service. We don't want public money spent on drinks and canapés when our communities are seeing their fire service cut to save money."

DUNCAN PHILLIPS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



Firefighter at the scene of the July 7 terrorist attack

In brief

The FBU has submitted a claim to employers for the maintenance of long-service bounty payments for firefighters on the retained duty system. The claim, to be considered by the NJC Joint Secretaries, follows the Government's insistence that RDS members will not be eligible to join the current Firefighters Pensions Scheme but only the inferior New Firefighters Pension Scheme.

The Union is urging any member affected by terrorism exclusion clauses in their personal insurance policies to provide their FBU branch secretary with full details and all appropriate documentation. This issue has been discussed with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for a considerable time and the Union is keen to resolve it to the satisfaction of all members.

Entry tests: everything you wanted to know ...

RECRUITMENT

Following on from the report on 'output' tests in January/February 2006 issue, *Firefighter* reports on 'input' tests – standards required at point of entry into the fire service. Following are the tests for common physical tasks a firefighter would be expected to carry out using personal protection equipment:

Ladder climb: confidence at heights. Climb ladder to 2nd floor height, take a leg lock identify a symbol and return to ground floor.

Confined space: Confidence, agility and stamina. Go through a crawl and walkway wearing a facemask initially with clear vision then half way

through with obscured vision.

Casualty evacuation: Upper and lower body strength and co-ordination. Drag a 55kg dummy 'casualty' around three sides of a 10 metre by 10 metre course.

Ladder lift: Upper and lower body strength and co-ordination. Raise and then lower a ladder lift simulator.

Equipment assembly: Manual dexterity and co-ordination. Applicants to assemble and then disassemble the components of a specified piece of equipment.

Equipment Carry: Endurance, upper and lower body strength and co-ordination. Carry equipment over a 25 metre shuttle course for 550 metres.

FBU and management at Nottinghamshire fire authority were in negotiation over a two-shift system as Firefighter went to press. The talks came after the fire authority deferred until 24 March a decision on a proposal by the chief fire officer to issue 90-day notices to impose a three-shift system and followed intensive lobbying by the FBU of local MPs and councillors.

Strike action by firefighters in Lancashire has been called off after an agreement was reached over crewing levels. Chief fire officer Peter Holland had wanted to cut the number of firefighters on some engines in a bid to save money. FBU members were unhappy with the proposals and threatened a strike ballot, but an agreement has been reached after talks. Steve Harman, secretary of the Lancashire FBU, said: "We believe that the agreement reached will not compromise the safety of our members or the service we deliver to the public."



FIFTH COLUMN

An anonymous take on events in a brigade near you

It's interesting to hear the word hindsight and look at the faces of the people who say it. It is a good word that can be used in all types of circumstances to try and absolve oneself from the responsibility of decision-making. Saying that hindsight is perfect is an attempt to provide a fig leaf for an appalling lack of foresight.

Let's put this to the test in the case of the West Midlands fire service and see whether or not the management have the right to absolve themselves from the responsibilities of their decisions over the new shift system and the associated changes.

1. Decision to change the shifts on the back of 'modernisation' (let's make them pay for getting a pay rise).
2. Sent 'Dear colleagues' letters to members' homes (outside the collective agreement) telling them they have to accept shift changes and that the brigade's preferred option is the 3x8
3. Entered into half-hearted negotiations with the FBU with the threat of the 3 x 8 as their preferred option.
4. Reached an agreement at TAP and then cherry-picked the outcomes.
5. Ploughed ahead with a new shift system that didn't work (and still doesn't work)
6. Bought a computer system to assist them but forgot to buy the proper software to make it work.
7. Forced the FBU into a ballot for industrial action by pure arrogance.
8. Forced strike action by head-in-the-sand management.
9. Listened to subordinate managers without question, (reminiscent of the emperor's new clothes).
10. Changed orders to fit the problem against all collective bargaining agreements.
11. Propped up the failings of the system by utilising overtime that

WEST MIDLANDS

Spaghetti Junction: hindsight in a very tangled web

hadn't been agreed.

12. Made up interpretations of National Joint Council-agreed conditions of service.
13. And then when it still did not work, blamed the firefighters for all the things that went wrong
14. The new system was based on firefighters' goodwill, cost neutral.
15. Now on communication visits to stations they put their hands up and admit 'We messed it up'.

It is a tangled web worthy of Spaghetti Junction that will be much more difficult to untangle.

Fire stations were forced to close. Fire calls were held in queues as no machines were available.

There were rogue crews who did not know each others' names. Fire engines sailed from one boundary to the next, provoking complaints from bordering fire authorities for being called to assist so much. There were up to 40 calls to fires because the rogue crew got lost. Firefighters were sent on standby and never got there before the end of shift while kit was not turning up at stations and didn't for the whole shift

Unsurprisingly, morale has collapsed across the brigade.

Now they have agreed to change the shift system, negotiate new conditions, negotiate with the FBU at all levels. In short, trying to dig themselves out of the dung heap that has collapsed all over them.

Saying 'hindsight is perfect' is used in an attempt to absolve the brigade of poor decision-making. And to absolve them from refusing to learn from previous errors, from refusing to listen, from a total lack of foresight.

Will they learn? Perhaps in future by using some foresight and listening to those who are 'off-message' – not only those that tell you the big idea has been a good idea because it comes from on high. The West Midlands have a track record of previous errors and a poor track record of learning from them, hindsight or no hindsight.

No choice

LOUISE HUTCHINS, CAMPAIGNS COORDINATOR,
ABORTION RIGHTS

“ Across the world women struggle to control even the most basic aspects of their lives. Control over when, if and how many children to have is crucial to women's life chances, their health and their equality. In Britain and much of the West, the introduction of the contraceptive pill and the legalisation of abortion have transformed women's lives – increasing women's employment and education prospects, incomes and opportunities more even than equal pay and equal opportunities legislation. Trade unions, including the FBU, have played an important role in campaigning for such rights and defending a woman's right to make her own choices.

Worldwide though, millions of women are denied access to reproductive health services due to legal restrictions and poverty. As a result, every year, 17 million women become pregnant unintentionally and some 46 million pregnancies end in induced abortion. Of these, 19 million women have no other choice than to have an unsafe abortion. Appallingly, 70,000 women unnecessarily lose their lives every year as a result. Millions of others are permanently injured.

One of the most dangerous countries for women's abortion access is Bangladesh where last year alone 718,002 women were hospitalised with serious complications from unsafe procedures.

George Bush has made it a priority to oppose women's access to abortion. One of his first acts as President was to re-introduce the 'Global Gag' rule, withholding US funding from health centres across the world that provide abortion services or information or which lobby for abortion rights. Access to safe abortion has been driven back in over 60 countries.

In the US too, during Bush's presidency, hundreds of individual states have passed laws to restrict women's legal rights to abortion. Abortion is now only available in 13 per cent of US counties and some whole states only have one abortion clinic left, forcing women to travel up to 100 miles for services and hitting poorer and young women hardest. Following the election of Bush's anti-choice nominee to

the US Supreme Court in February, moves have already begun to restrict US wide federal laws for the first time since the groundbreaking 1973 Roe v Wade case which first introduced federal abortion rights.

With countries such as Ireland, Northern Ireland and Poland still banning abortion and many others severely restricting access, the World Health Organisation estimates that 800,000 women are forced to resort to unsafe abortions in Europe with women still dying due to barriers to safe legal abortion. Bush's aggressive anti-choice agenda has significantly strengthened the anti-choice lobby across the region. Italy, for example, is now debating major restrictions in current rights.

Although women's right to choose is overwhelmingly supported in Britain, it is not a settled issue. Women still face unfair barriers to accessing abortion including long NHS delays and obstructive GPs. Here, a strengthened anti-choice lobby is using sections of the press to focus on later abortion in order to confuse opinion on a woman's right to choose and win support for the chipping away of women's rights. Very few women need access to later abortion but they face exceptional and distressing circumstances and need the protection of the law.

Abortion Rights, the pro-choice campaign for the UK, is working with other pro-choice groups in the US, Europe and internationally to support women's rights to safe, legal abortion.

We are leading the campaigning in Britain to defend women's hard fought for abortion rights against the current attacks on the time limit and have launched a national postcard lobbying campaign 'would you turn the clock back on her rights?'.

We urge all those who support women's equality and health to send the postcard to their MP and get involved in our campaigning to defend women's abortion rights in Britain and worldwide.

”

→ For more information, to join as an individual member or to affiliate your FBU branch, please visit www.abortionrights.org.uk



A woman holds her child
outside the one-room tin
shed where they live in
Tangail, Bangladesh

Campaign success: the FBU's campaign for a wide-ranging strategy to tackle attacks on firefighters has secured a major success



ACTION ON ATTACKS

There is overwhelming cross-party backing for a new law to make it an offence to obstruct or hinder emergency workers such as firefighters, – a key plank of the union's campaign to reduce such attacks. The Emergency Workers Protection Bill received its second reading in the House of Commons on 3 March and will now continue through its further stages.

The Bill's sponsor, Swansea West Labour MP Alan Williams, told the Commons of the "mindless vandalism" and "grotesque bent minds" of those who attack fire crews.

He described those who set up ambushes for fire crews in some areas as "warped". Mr Williams quoted at length from the FBU's campaign materials which outlined the details of some of the attacks.

The FBU's campaign highlighted the fact that attacks on UK fire crews were running at 40 a week with the problem getting worse. The union's research found that under-reporting suggested the figure could be as high as 120 attacks a week.

In some parts of the country, fire crews are frequently pelted with stones, bricks, bottles and missiles as they fight fires. In other incidents ambuses have been set for firefighters to lure them to an incident to be attacked.

These have included scaffolding poles being thrown through windscreens of fire engines; crews being attacked with concrete blocks, bricks and bottles; being shot at; spat at; equipment tampered with or stolen; direct physical assaults on fire crews; and equipment being urinated on.

The union and its Parliamentary Support Group have worked closely with Alan Williams in building support for the Bill. Andrew Dismore MP, who chairs the support group was one of its sponsors.

He told the Commons: "I was the solic-

itor for the Fire Brigades Union for almost 20 years. In that capacity, I saw many cases of firefighters who were injured as a result of arson or assault.

"Some injuries were career threatening. Some firefighters even had to retire as a result of what happened to them. For that reason, I strongly welcome the additional protections afforded by the Bill and, in particular, the Government's assurances as to how such offences should be treated in future. "Similarly, if we send out the clear message from the House by allowing this Bill to pass

'Some injuries were career threatening. Some firefighters even had to retire as a result of what happened to them'

through Parliament that we, as parliamentarians, are standing up for our emergency service workers and will not tolerate this, people will report offences more and the legal system will treat them far more seriously.

"If firefighters cannot carry out their jobs because of violent assaults, the communities in which those assaults are being committed are being put at risk.

"Fire crews welcome the Bill because it complements the package of measures that are being put in place to tackle the underlying problem. The FBU hopes that it will get widespread support.

"It cannot be right that anybody serving the public, whether as an emergency worker or more generally, should be subject to assault or abuse. Everybody doing such a job is entitled to be treated with respect and dignity.

"If a fire engine on the way to a fire call is impeded and slowed down, that could result in the loss of valuable minutes in attending that call. Although nobody in the fire crew may have been hurt or directly assaulted, the people depending on that emergency response may find that they have suffered as a result through greater destruction of property, or possibly even injury or loss of life.

"The new offence would do a great service not only to fire crews and ambulance workers but to the general public as a whole, who may otherwise have their emergency response delayed."

The Home Office, that had originally resisted the Bill, dropped its opposition when Mr Williams agreed to compromise and leave out a specific offence of assaulting an emergency worker. The Home Office argued – with some justification – that there were already a range of general criminal laws that could be used in cases of assault.

Home Office minister Fiona Mactaggart conceded, however, that a new law of obstruction and impeding emergency service workers was needed. She accepted that an existing law of obstructing the fire service was cumbersome and difficult to use.

Supporting the Bill on the basis it will be amended at its Committee Stage, she told MPs: "The new offence will be part of a larger package, raising public awareness and sending a

strong message about the unacceptability of assaulting or obstructing emergency service workers. We are committed to working for a more active prosecution of these incidents and to use innovative and simpler penalties such as penalty notices for disorder, acceptable behaviour contracts and community penalties to make sure we prevent incidences of obstructing emergency workers from escalating dangerously.

"We are working with the Sentencing Guidelines Council to ensure that courts treat assaults against public sector workers, including emergency workers, particularly seriously."

FBU national officer Paul Woolstenholmes welcomed Government and cross-party support for the Bill. "We are the targets, but it is our communities which are deprived of an emergency response which are the victims," he said.

"The Bill needs to be part of a package of measures aimed at tackling some of the underlying problems. Central to this package is the need for a range of educational measures to try and stop these attacks happening."

National Officer John McGhee, who is responsible for the union's political work, said: "It is very unusual for a Private Members Bill to make it onto the statute book, but we worked hard to build support from Government and all other parties. It is clear that large numbers of members have raised this issue with their local MPs, complementing the work which has been done at national level.

"Our Parliamentary Group has worked very closely with Alan Williams who approached us as soon as he was drawn high up on the 'ballot' for Private Members Bills. This campaign has come a long way in the last 12 months and we are making major inroads."

► www.fbu.org.uk/campaigns/attacks/



Damage to Northern Ireland Fire Brigade vehicles caused by attacks



1947

Firefighters Pension Scheme set up

1997

European Council Directive published along with a framework agreement

2000

Part Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations transpose the directive into uk law

1947

1997

1998

1999

2000

2001

THE ROAD TO FOR RETAINED

The FBU victory on pensions for retained duty system firefighters confirmed the union is the only organisation able to act effectively for them

The FBU has won a major legal victory for firefighters working the retained duty system in a test case at the House of Lords. The landmark decision – by a 3 to 2 majority of Law Lords – paves the way for firefighters working RDS to have access to the current Firefighters Pension Scheme.

The decision – hailed by legal experts as one of the most important decisions this year – also opens the door to better sick pay and access to a host of other rights based on the principle of equal treatment with wholetime firefighters.

The case centred on the exclusion of retained firefighters from the Firefighters Pension Scheme and worse treatment under the sick pay scheme. They claimed they were being treated differently because they are part-time workers and that this was unlawful.

The FBU backed the test case throughout at considerable expense, although the employers will now pay most of those costs which run into several hundreds of thousands of pounds. The union was represented by the leading employment and pension lawyers Thompsons, Robin Allen QC and barrister Martin Seaward.

General Secretary Matt Wrack said: "This momentous decision paves the way to ending 60 years of discrimination against firefighters working retained duty. Retained firefighters are first class firefighters and will no longer

have to accept second class employment rights.

"We are on course to ensuring firefighters working retained duty will no longer serve their communities for years then be left without a pension. Having secured holiday rights, sick pay rights and proper time off, we have now taken a major step to securing access to the current pension scheme, not simply the new one being offered.

"The Fire Brigades Union has fought this case for many years against great odds. Once again, we have proved we are the only organisation in the fire service with the will and the means to protect firefighters working retained duty."

Tam Mitchell, FBU national executive member representing firefighters working RDS said: "This groundbreaking decision will reverberate around the fire service for years to come. No one else had the guts, the will or the means to do what we have done.

"We were heavily criticised for even taking the legal action by one organisation claiming to represent some firefighters working RDS. We have proved we are the only ones within the fire service who can stand up against discrimination directed against firefighters working retained duty."

The FBU used the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 to argue that retained firefighters, as "part-time" workers, are being discriminated against in relation to their wholetime colleagues. The FBU lodged Employment Tribunal claims in 2000 on behalf of ALL of its retained fire-fighter members claiming that they should receive the same entitlements to membership of the Firefighters Pension Scheme, sick pay and additional pay for additional respon-



TO VICTORY FIREFIGHTERS

sibilities as their whole-time colleagues.

The cases were brought against all United Kingdom fire service employers of FBU members working RDS and what is now the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (as the administrator of the pension scheme). Twelve "lead" cases were selected from the Royal Berkshire and Kent and Medway Towns fire authorities.

The claims were rejected at the Employment Tribunal, the Employment Appeal Tribunal and the Court of Appeal. But the House of Lords ruled that retained and whole-time firefighters were employed under the "same type of contract". Employers could not draw a distinction between the two types of contract and defeat the claim.

The House of Lords ruled the original Employment Tribunal had misapplied the law in determining that the work of retained and whole-time firefighters was not "the same or broadly similar".

This part of the case is to be referred back to the Employment Tribunal for re-consideration in the light of the House of Lords judgment.

In the leading judgment Baroness Hale noted that "the Tribunal found that 'at the scene of the fire the actual job function carried out by all attending is effectively the same'. The retained and whole-time firefighters were indistinguishable from one another".

She went on to say: "the fact that the full-timers do some extra tasks would not prevent their work being the same or broadly similar ... weight should be given to the extent to which their work is in fact the same and to the importance of that work to the enterprise as a whole. Otherwise one runs the risk of giving too much weight to differences which are the almost inevitable result of one

worker working full-time and another working less than full-time."

Lord Hope, in a supporting judgment, said that the tribunal's analysis "led them to concentrate on the differences and not to assess the weight that ought to be given to the similarities." The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's argument that retained firefighters were treated no less favourably on an overall analysis of their terms and conditions was rejected.

What the judgment means

The issue of whether the work of the retained and whole-time fire-fighters is the same or broadly similar will now return to the Employment Tribunal. The ET will now have to give greater emphasis to the common central role of fighting fires, and focus on the similarities between the two duty systems as opposed to the differences.

The FBU is confident, after the House of Lords judgment, that the tribunal will conclude that the work is the "same or broadly similar". This means firefighters working RDS will be entitled not to be treated less favourably than whole-timers.

They will have to be entitled to join the Firefighters Pension Scheme with backdating, to the same pay and other conditions and otherwise equal treatment (for example, comparable training).

This will apply to all retained fire-fighters represented by the FBU. There is no guarantee any settlement will go beyond those represented by the FBU, as they were not party to the action.

→ www.fbu.org.uk/aboutus/sections/retained/

Union case gathers momentum

As the House of Commons Select Committee continues to examine the ODPM's high-risk project, the union's own proposals for Resilience Controls are gaining ground

The House of Commons Select Committee, examining the FireControl Project and other fire service issues, is unlikely to finish its report before the end of May. The union's own proposals for Resilience Controls are gaining momentum within the fire service and with some MPs.

Executive Council member for control staff, Val Salmon said: "I hope members are pressing the case for our alternative, because in some cases they are pushing at an open door with fire authorities and key players within the fire service."

"We need to encourage fire authorities to keep asking questions about the costs and how this will work. ODPM are still making this up as they go along and making claims which are either misleading and in some cases entirely false."

The chief fire officers who gave evidence supporting the plans had to concede alternative plans had not been looked at and could work. They could produce no hard evidence to the Committee of specific gains in performance produced by FireControl beyond generalised assertions and opinions about improved resilience and better technology, but only for those brigades which did not already have it.

Instead of destroying the current existing network, the union's proposals utilise its known and demonstrable strengths without the risks and massive costs associated with the ODPM proposals. In contrast, and despite repeated attempts by the Select Committee, it found no hard figures as to the actual costs of FireControl – as opposed to rough estimates – and even woollier evidence of any benefits.

In oral evidence to the Committee (uncorrected transcript) ODPM Civil Servants admitted they would not have key costs available until "later this year". The top civil servant, Alun Evans, told the committee the Department could not have a full business case until it knew the capital costs of the project and the ODPM, he said, did "not even have them". Clive Betts MP said it "seemed a little strange" there was neither a final cost nor a Final Business Case yet ODPM "are absolutely certain it is going to work".

Pressed further, Mr Evans accepted that if it did not deliver value for money "then of course one would not go ahead." Pressed for an "absolute guarantee" all cost overruns would be met by central Government and not fire and rescue authorities he replied: "That is what we said, yes."

Minister Phil Woolas appeared to take a different tack on cost issues in his evidence. Set up costs would be met by Government, but running costs would be met by fire authorities, he said. In some contrast to Alun Evans's evidence he said Government could not guarantee it would undertake all costs.

Some of those costs are what are known as "out of scope". These are the costs the ODPM insist they won't count in "Project Costs" to maintain the pretence that FireControl will save money.

Reacting to a comment by Clive Betts that out of scope work which still had to be carried out meant savings by cutting staff numbers were not therefore "a true total saving" civil servant Marie Winckler replied: "How they choose to fulfil those functions is up to them". Ms Winckler told the Committee she could

.....
We need to keep up the pressure in advance of the May elections, speak to candidates, state our case and keep up the momentum

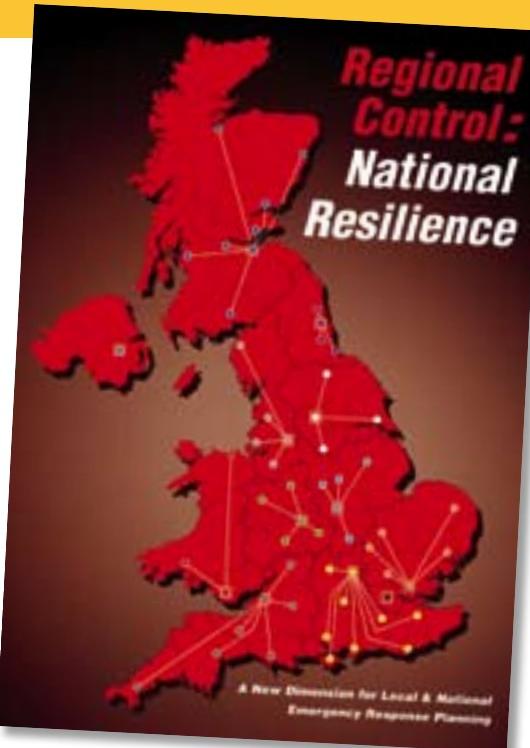
.....

"not recall" a specific figure attached to "out of scope" costs.

Pressed on what actual evidence the ODPM could produce to support fire minister Jim Fitzpatrick's claim to Parliament that response times would improve, the civil servants could not produce any. Marie Winckler's best attempt was to assert that time would be measured differently in future: "At the moment response times are not measured in the same way as they are going to be measured in future."

National officer Geoff Ellis said the union would continue to press its case. "We need to continue to take our case into the heart of our communities. Even those who appear to support FireControl start ducking and diving when they are tested on the issue.

"We can't just sit back and wait for the Select Committee. We have mounted an incredible campaign up to now, but we need to keep up the pressure in advance of the May elections, speak to candidates, state our case and keep up the momentum."



In the twilight zone

I am sure you have heard of the twilight zone. Well I am going to tell you what it's like and how the FBU helped me to escape from it.

After being an operational firefighter for nearly 20 years I fell ill, mentally ill. At first, I got little understanding from my brigade. Then I made a serious suicide attempt on my life, surviving by sheer luck.

Suffering from occupational and severe personal stress and from depression for some eleven months, I finally went out for lunch. Unbeknown to the police who attended my suicide attempt, I had already disposed of my shotguns. But they still responded to my house with an armed response unit in scenes similar to the 1970s hit series *The Sweeney*. Obviously they cannot be criticised for such action. After all, there are a lot of 'nutters' around!

The arrest – I was escorted to a jail cell by four or five police officers – wasn't too pleasant either. Although looking back, I do have to smile at the image of them as, having released my handcuffs, they all tried to get through a single door opening at the same time.

That was the beginning of perhaps a six-hour wait for a psychiatrist that would lead to me being sectioned under the Mental Health Act for 28 days and my 'voluntary' stay in a mental hospital for a further three and a half months. Thanks to illness and medication my memory of this experience is a bit hazy. But what I can recall from my incarceration was that I was supervised 24/7, walked on the tables, spat my medication out and was totally psychotic and paranoid. On top of all that, the FBI was waiting outside ready to deport me in a UFO. "What a crazy world, eh?"

Well, I suppose you are wondering why I am telling you all of this personal stuff? The fact is my illness was genuine. So why was it not taken seriously from day one when I handed in my

After being operational for nearly 20 years FBU member Mick Crow fell mentally ill. Here's his story and how the Union helped him through it.

sick-note? It did appear that some in management knew more than my doctor, although they never have seen my medical records (they are some inches thick by now!)

The real nitty-gritty stuff came to light when I was retired from the job. After speaking to my doctors I applied for a qualifying injury award because they believed a significant proportion of my illness was attributed to my operational duties. Although doctors do not like to label anyone with a mental illness, psychotic depression and schizophrenia were both mentioned early on. They were caused by post-traumatic stress disorder relating to my fire service duties. Easy you might think: pay him off and retire him. But it was not so simple.

In all, it took the Shropshire Fire and Rescue

Service and in particular Maurice Brookes, former Shropshire FBU brigade secretary, four years to settle the claim. Maurice spent countless hours on this case, fighting for my cause at a time when I was too unwell to fend for myself. Once the award was granted, the brigade still dragged its feet – at a time when I could have done with the settlement from a financial point of view but also for my mental wellbeing. The brigade took it right up to the point where they were threatened with legal action.

Towards the end, Maurice and the brigade arranged an advance on my injury award relating to the minimum amount I would receive in any event, prior to a final settlement being agreed. Apparently this is groundbreaking and well worth noting for the future.

Standing on a table

In 20 years I had never needed the FBU. But they were there when I finally needed them. I can remember standing on a table in hospital moaning at Maurice and the occupational nurse, Chris Meusz (somebody else I thought I would never need) that they had taken my belt away. I pulled my trousers down over my hips to show them how much weight I had lost and that I could not keep my trousers up. Unfortunately, they could not sort that one out for me! Through loyalty, Maurice continued with my case even after his retirement, as did my psychiatrist Dr Myers. So this world does still have nice people!

My final words of advice are these: value your FBU because you never know when you need it; marry a good wife to help you through the bad times; never take things too seriously and never, ever, lose your sense of humour. After what 'we' went through, if you cannot laugh about it you will surely go nuts!

→ See article on page 18

FBU COMMENT

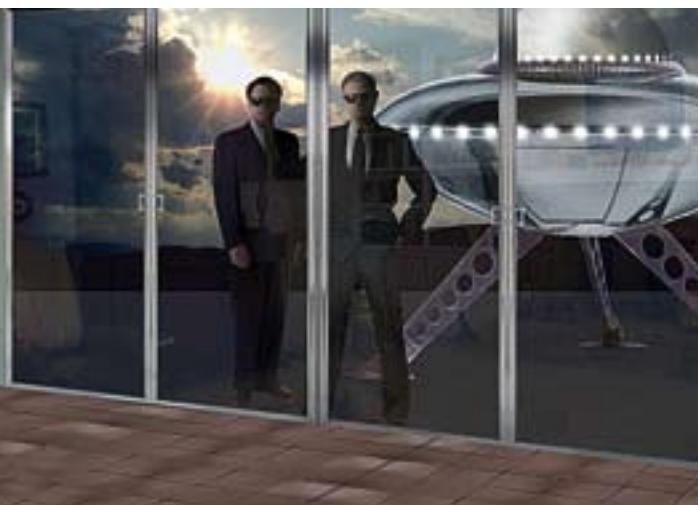
We had a difficult time representing Mick Crow. It was decided to allow our retiring brigade secretary (2003) to continue his close working relationship with our member. The Brigade Committee and I wish to thank Steve Mitchell, formerly of Thompson's, Stoke, for his advice. But very special thanks and well done to Maurice Brookes who never gave up and achieved a successful outcome for our member. Our member is well on the road to recovery and is rebuilding his life with his loving and supportive wife and family.

Tony Pearson

FBU Brigade Secretary, Shropshire



'...the FBI was waiting outside ready to deport me with a UFO'



STEVE CAPLIN

WHAT DOES A CHIEF FIRE OFFICER DO?

From the first spark of a suggestion, through to making the case to government, acquiring the money and ultimately seeing how spending it translates on the ground, Northern Ireland's Chief Fire Officer Colin Lammey has his work cut out

Every six weeks, Colin Lammey will get out on a job alongside the men and women he leads. It is familiar territory: Northern Ireland's Chief Fire Officer has come up through the ranks to head up one of the larger and more challenging services in the UK.

He has four area commanders in charge of day to day operations, who in turn are in charge of 14 districts. The service has a budget of £63m revenue and £8m capital to run 67 stations.

"A lot of my day-to-day work revolves around money – trying to get more for the service and then making sure, quite rightly, that we spend it wisely because it's not just getting handed to us these days," says Mr Lammey, who has to show money is well spent through both internal and external audits. It sounds far removed from fighting fires.

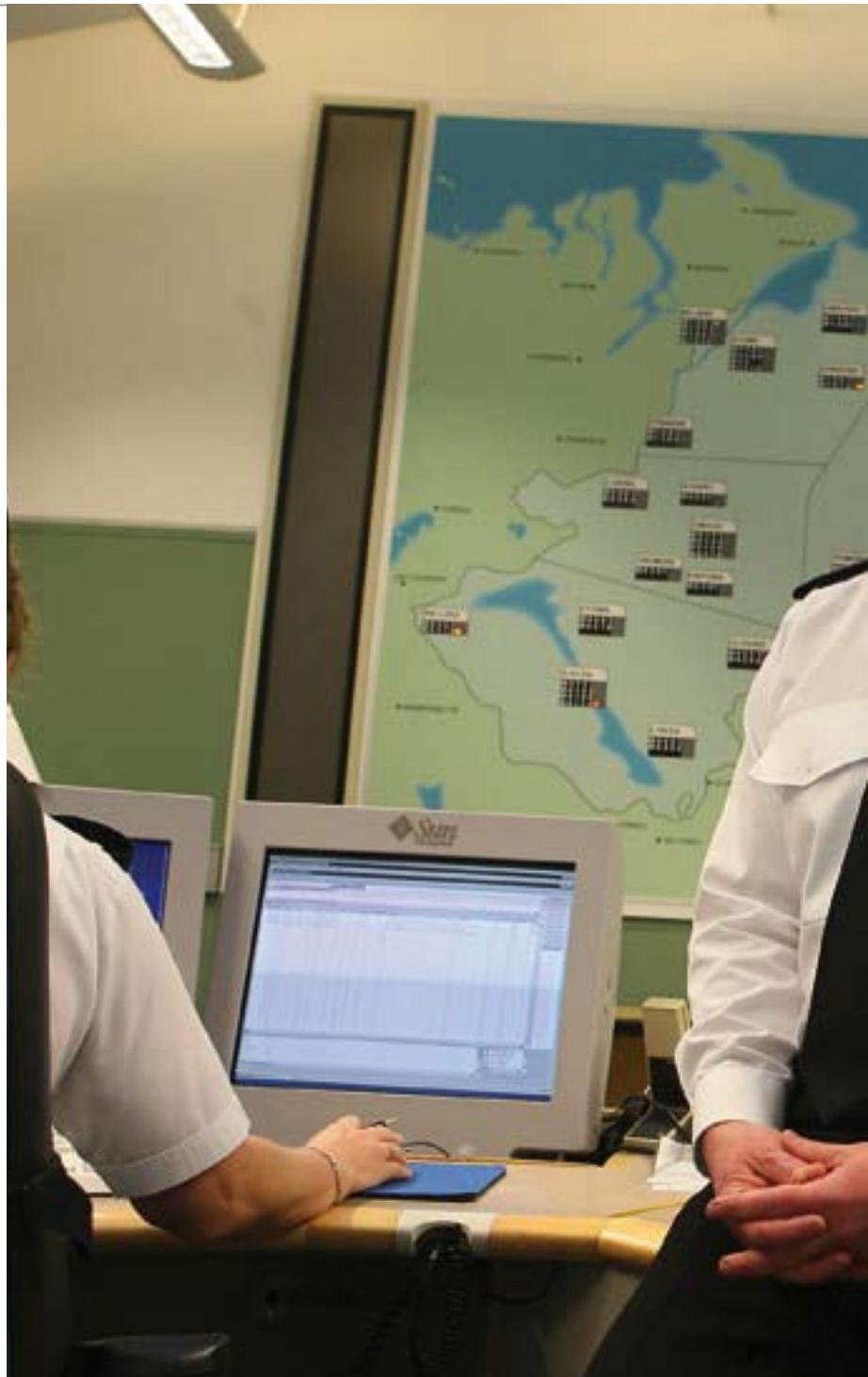
But responsibility for around 1,000 full time, 900 retained and 300 support staff yields its own satisfactions. These include "working with others including the FBU to see projects through to fruition – from the first spark of a suggestion, through to making the case

to government, acquiring the money and ultimately seeing how spending it translates on the ground." And he adds, "what it will mean to firefighters on the ground in making their job safer is the number one priority".

He welcomes the 50 per cent drop in attacks on crews between 2004/5 and 2005/6 – which he puts down to a mix of community initiatives and a raised public awareness – including TV adverts showing the consequences of attacks on fire and ambulance crews.

Firefighters are increasingly involved in education and community outreach, beyond fire prevention. Take the Roadsaftey Roadshow, a hard-hitting campaign aimed at getting young drivers most at risk of crashing cars to slow down and drive safely. It is a joint initiative with the police and hospital accident and emergency units.

In Northern Ireland the fire service comes under the Department of Health, rather than the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. This enables it to use health service networks for community outreach,



Local Hero

RAY PRICE

Vice chair National Retained Committee

Making his mark



It is no surprise to learn that Ray Price joined the union as soon as took up firefighting. Ray, a gas engineer in his day job, works out of Stourport-on-Severn, one of Hereford and Worcester's solely retained stations. And he's certainly making his mark.

Ray's energy and commitment have helped turn round recruitment and services to retained members in Region 7, with "first class support" from wholetime and regional colleagues. Along with fellow retained reps across the region – which also spans Warwickshire, West Midlands, Staffordshire and Shropshire – he has worked to ensure a better deal for members. "We now have a structure in place that supports retained members across region," says Ray, a man reluctant to take any personal glory, but whose colleagues are quick to acknowledge his role in reaching out to new members and listening to those already on board.

It's a strategy that's paying off. He has played a key role in boosting membership and involving more retained members in the union. He has set up a touring "Roadshow," along with other retained reps, promoting the benefits of FBU membership and maintaining contact with members at risk of feeling isolated from union affairs.

He is now vice chair of the National Retained Committee. But his union career began quite unspectacularly. "I was taken on as branch rep at the station when I was on holiday and no-one wanted the job," says Ray, whose greatest chore in the early days "was opening branch mail."

Then came the pay dispute. The station voted for industrial action and retained members were picket-line regulars at Kidderminster, the nearest wholetime station, strengthening already good relations. Ray was nominated as retained brigade rep by a Kidderminster colleague and took on the responsibility because he had a supportive employer who lets him work flexibly. He has not looked back.

"Without the support of my region it would not have been successful so many thanks should go to all regional and brigade officials and to the brigade retained reps."

→ More info: www.fbu.org.uk/aboutus/sections/retained/



including local Investing in Health partnerships.

Colin Lammey plays an active role in the UK'S Chief Fire Officers Association, where ideas and experience are pooled, and as Northern Ireland rep he can offer expertise on dealing with terrorism. Fire chiefs in other parts of the UK are interested in staging their own Roadsafe Roadshow to save young lives. As Northern Ireland is a devolved administration, "we watch the good practice that comes from the UK and pick it up. And if it doesn't apply in Northern Ireland we don't."

Colin Lammey believes it's important for a chief officer to go out on calls from time to time: "It gives me the chance to talk to firefighters at the sharp end and get feed back over new equipment or procedures. They are not reticent in speaking out if things are not working correctly." Talking to this fire chief, who regularly puts in more than 12 hours a day and clearly relishes his job, you get the feeling he'd expect nothing less.

Colin Lammey in the Lisburn control room of the Northern Ireland Fire Brigade

It's all in your Mind

One in four of us will suffer from mental distress at some time in our lives

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health problems can affect anyone. Many people don't realise just how common mental distress is, but one in four of us will experience a mental health problem at some point in our lives. Each year more than 250,000 people are admitted to psychiatric hospitals – and over 4,000 people take their own lives.

Whether we're aware of it or not, it's likely that we all know someone who has experience of a mental health problem. But what does that actually mean? The term 'mental health problem' encompasses many different diagnoses, including anxiety, depression, manic depression (bipolar disorder) and schizophrenia. These are all different conditions with different symptoms, but they can all affect the way people think, feel or behave. This can in turn significantly affect their relationships, employment and quality of life. However, with appropriate treatment and support, most people either recover completely or manage their condition so that it does not

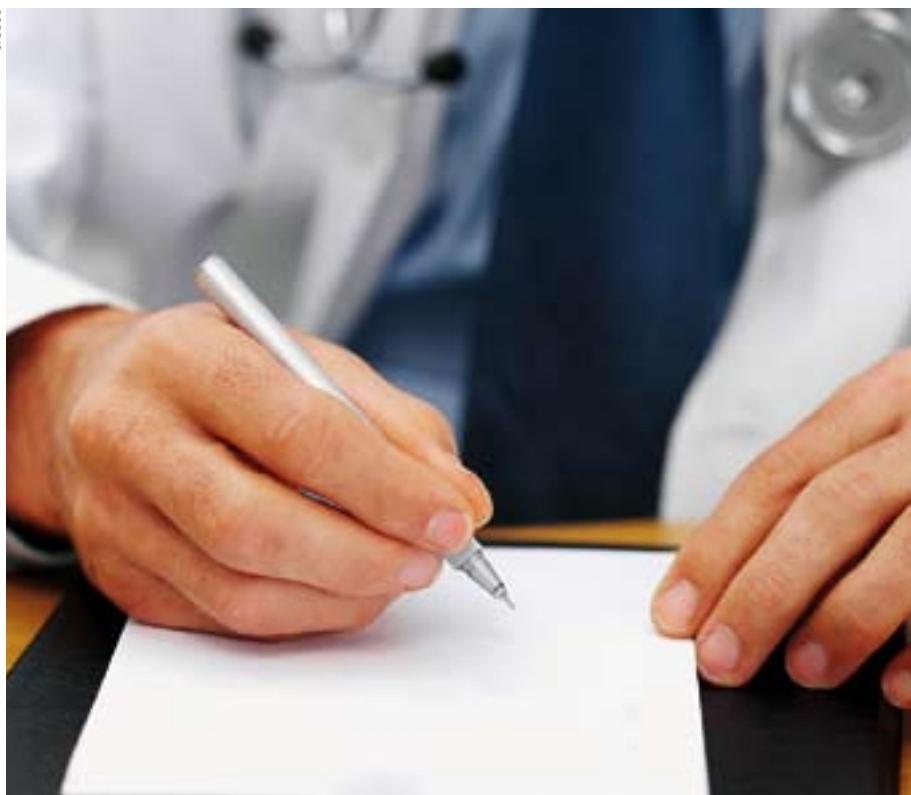
dominate day-to-day living.

Mind launches its 60th anniversary celebrations this year, which will focus on supporting people with mental health problems to speak out and be listened to. Many of the problems experienced are exacerbated by the stigma and misunderstanding attached to mental health conditions. In May, Mind week will focus on motherhood and depression, releasing new research on 15 May to expose the desperate need for better services and health professionals in this area.

Speak out

Currently Mind is working to expose the neglect of older people's mental health with its Access all ages campaign. It seems obvious that we should be treated on the basis of our need not our age, yet for many older people mental health needs are not met. At the heart of this neglect lies the fact that the National Service Framework (NSF) for Mental Health only deals with adults up to the age of 65. This means the NSF for Older People is left to deal with mental health for older people – but with no ring-fenced funds attached, these needs

CORBIS



Concerns are growing about the side-effects of prescription medication such as antidepressants

SUPPORT, HELP AND ADVICE

Call MindInfoLine: 0845 766 0163 (Monday to Friday 9.15am to 5.15pm) for

◆ information on all aspects of mental ill health

◆ sources of help in the local area.

With a network of over 200 affiliated local Mind associations, the organisation also provides services such as counselling, self-help groups and information provision across England and Wales.

are frequently lost among the many other concerns for older people. At age 65 in many areas of England and Wales your status changes overnight; you are suddenly classed as an older person or even 'geriatric'. Because of funding criteria, this change affects your ability to access mental health services, leading to a serious reduction in the range and level of services available. Sadly, older people also reported that age discrimination amongst medical professionals is prevalent, with age barriers operating on treatments such as talking therapies.

Better treatment choice

Another major Mind campaign is on psychiatric drugs. With concerns growing about the side effects of prescription medication such as antidepressants, Mind has been lobbying hard for transparency from the pharmaceutical industry and for better treatment choice, with wider and earlier access to treatments other than drugs. Recently Mind commissioned research into people's experiences of trying to come off medication; subsequent recommendations include better training for prescribers, allocation of funds for services to support people coming off psychiatric drugs and commissioning user-led projects offering independent information, advice and mutual support.

Contact us for help, support and advice (see left) and if you would like to support Mind financially or participate in our campaigns for better services for people with mental health problems, visit our website. You can donate using a debit or credit card on the site or by calling 0845 456 1078.

→ Find out more at www.mind.org.uk

This article was written by Sarah Williams, Campaigns Officer at Mind

Inappropriate duties

Q My contract of employment specifies that my job description is detailed in the Grey Book but my employers have now sent me a new contract with a job description which lists my duties within the Role Maps but also allows the Brigade to require me to do any other duties they specify as appropriate.

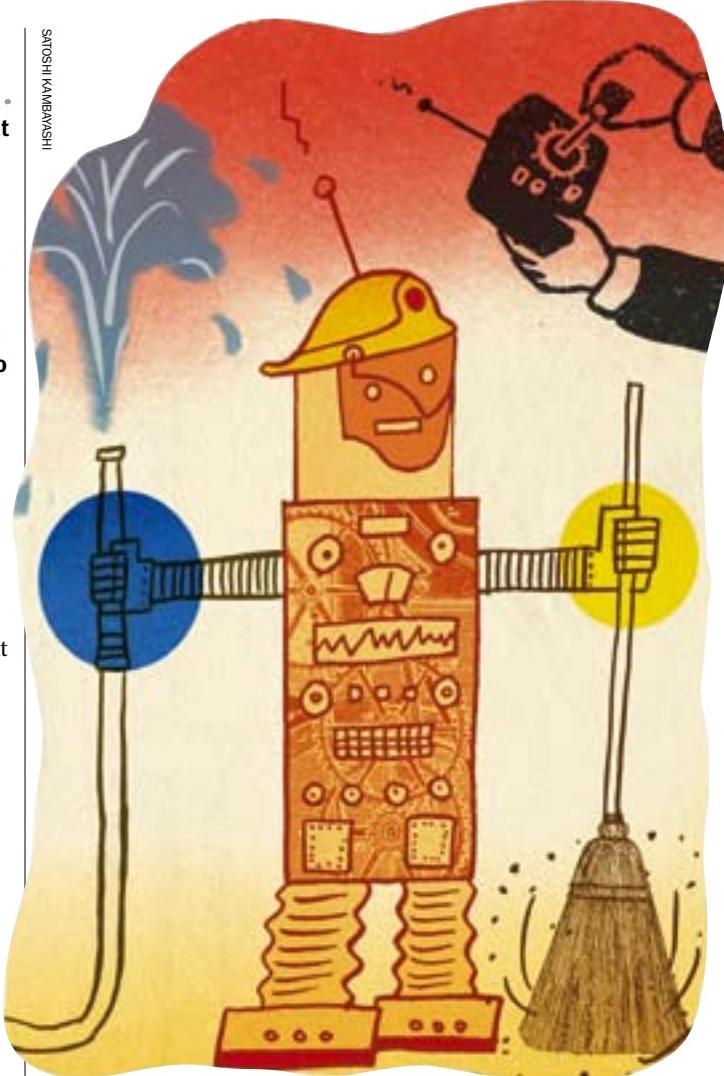
A Under the Grey Book Section 3 confirms that Fire & Rescue Authorities can require any reasonable activity to be carried out by an individual employee within his or her Role Map. It does not permit employers to require members to undertake additional duties. It is important that this is challenged because failure to do so will lead to the new contract becoming binding.

Contact your FBU representative. It may be that this document has been sent to numerous other members and it may be possible to promptly resolve the dispute by negotiation. If not a grievance should be lodged and it may be necessary to obtain legal assistance.

Sick leave after work accident

Q I have been absent from duty on long term sick leave for six months. This was due to an accident at work. I have been given a certificate for a further three months but the Brigade say that they will now reduce my pay to half pay.

A If it can be established that the continued sick leave is due to service, you are entitled to 12 months sick pay and at least six months half pay under Section 5, Part B.11 of the Grey Book. This should be pointed out and a grievance taken out if agreement cannot be reached. But if the dispute is due to a medical opinion obtained by the employers that the continued absence is not due to service the



Legal Beagle

Answers to some frequently asked legal questions that members put to the FBU

procedure under Section 5, Part B.29 of the Grey Book would apply. This provides for differences of opinion to be resolved through the Independent Medical Opinion process.

Gross misconduct, my defence

Q I have been accused of gross misconduct by my manager. I have not been given any details of allegations or any chance to put forward my comments or my Defence. I

have been told that I will now receive a notice of dismissal.

A This is not correct. Even where the allegation is gross misconduct, you should be told about the allegations and given a chance to defend yourself at a disciplinary hearing. The disciplinary procedure guide in Section 6 of the Grey Book, paragraph 54, makes it clear that employers should give employees the opportunity of putting their case at a disciplinary hearing before deciding whether to take action. This

principle applies as much to cases of gross misconduct as it does to ordinary cases of misconduct or unsatisfactory performance.

Disability and my job

Q I have a longstanding disability which affects my work. I can do most of my job although I have difficulties with certain aspects, but fairly simply measures by my employers would resolve these difficulties. I have discussed this informally with my manager who was unhelpful and indicated that my employment may be terminated if I cannot do my job.

A If your disability qualifies under the Disability Discrimination Act, you are entitled to request that the Brigade make reasonable adjustments which will enable you to do your job. A formal request should now be put in. If that is refused consult your FBU representative. You will be advised to challenge the refusal by lodging a grievance under the Grey Book.

If the refusal is maintained, it may be necessary to bring Employment Tribunal proceedings under the Act. Please note there are strict time limits such that the proceedings would have to be taken within three months of the refusal and cannot be commenced until 28 days after you have lodged the grievance in writing. There are certain circumstances in which this time limit can be extended but the safest course is to lodge the grievance early so that the 28-day time period will expire before the three-month time limit. Tribunal proceedings can then be brought after the 28 days have expired but within the three-month time limit.

→ Write in with your legal problem to legalbeagle@fbu.org.uk and those of widest relevance to FBU members in the workplace will be selected and answered in future editions. With thanks to Thompsons solicitors.

'It's so important we stay in this division'

Managing one of the Northern League's best loved football clubs during a crucial relegation fight is no mean feat, says Peter Johnson

When Northumbrian firefighter Peter Martin Johnson has a day off, he has more than likely got the beautiful game on his mind. Peter, a leading firefighter at Blyth station, was recently appointed manager of Ashington – one of the North East's most historic and best loved football clubs.

Peter, 44, is an avid Newcastle United fan and played full-back at semi-pro level in his younger days. And he's expecting a few sleepless nights before the season is out.

The pressure is really on for him and players at the club where Ashington-born soccer legends Bobby and Jackie Charlton – both members of England's World Cup winning side in 1966 – first got a taste for the game.

The footballing brothers were not the only sons of Ashington "responsible for sewing the name of the town deep in the very fabric of football," as the club's website puts it. Their uncle Jackie Milburn – also known as "Wor Jackie" is still celebrated in the town as Newcastle's greatest Number Nine – there's even a statue marking his place in local history.

But now the club is facing challenges on two fronts – a fight to stay up in the Northern League's First Division, and

uncertainty over where it will be playing next season. This could well be the last season at Portland Park – the well-equipped town centre ground where the club has played for nearly 100 years. It has been served with a notice to quit by the council, which owns the land, and the team could be without a ground in the town for the next few years or more.

WORRYING TIME

Portland Park's prime-site town centre site makes the ground ripe for retail development and the council has been approached by a consortium keen to do just that. Details about which stores plan to move in are not yet available – but the nearest Tesco is around 15 miles away, and locals are speculating that it could be among well-known High Street names keen to move in. "For years there's been a lot of talk about the site being developed. But this time it looks like it's going to happen, which makes it a worrying time for both players and fans, especially when we are facing a relegation fight." Supporters have organised a petition to "Keep Ashington in Ashington" when Portland Park is knocked down. People are signing up fast in clubs, shops, and offices – and more than 700 have already signed up online, many from

outside the area.

Peter explains why there's a lot resting on the battle against relegation. "The developers have to promise to build a new stadium for us. But it depends what level we're at. If we're in the first division of the Northern League it would give us an excellent new stadium. That's why it's so important we stay in this division." He has brought in new players to boost

Peter guides the team during a home game in February in the dressing room (below) and the pitch (below and right).





MARTIN JENKINS

the team's performance since coming to the club and, though far from complacent is "quietly confident" the team will stay up.

Peter has risen rapidly at Ashington since he was headhunted from nearby Morpeth, a rival Northern Premier League club, three months ago. He came as coach and assistant manager – but found himself in the hot seat within a few weeks after the manager was sacked following a run of disappointing results. It is Peter's first crack at managing a club, and he's rising to the challenge.

"Obviously it's not the best time to be in charge when there's a relegation threat hanging over our heads and we don't know where we are going to be playing next season, and it looks like we're going to have to share a ground for the next three years. But we are determined to stay up."

6 O'CLOCK START

He is managing to work his footballing commitments around his work in the fire service and can still make it for a 6 o'clock start to the night shift if the team has an away fixture on a Saturday afternoon. He manages to swap Saturday day shifts with helpful colleagues so he doesn't have to miss games. The team trains twice a week and plays on Wednesday night under floodlights.

In his time, Peter has played for the Northumberland County Football Team made up of firefighters in the county and five-a-side teams within the service, making it through to the semi-final of the British Firefighters Cup in his younger days.

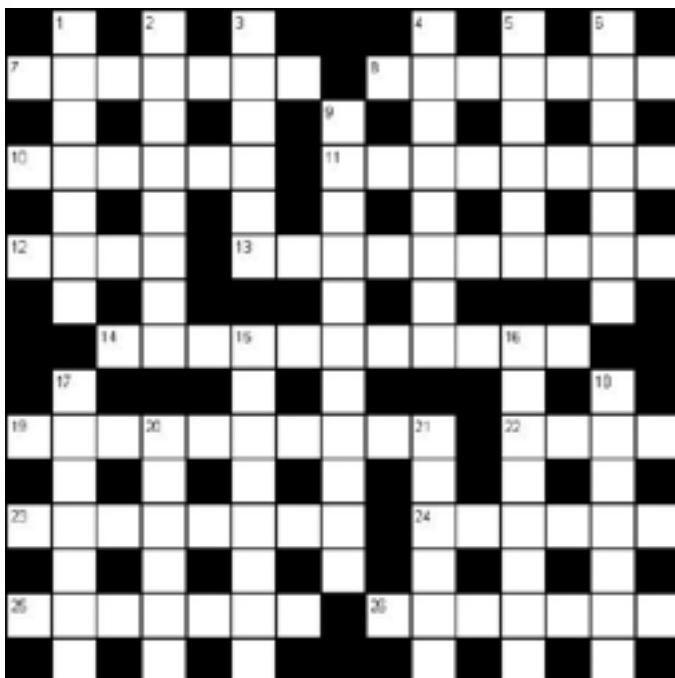
Peter is proud to be managing a club with such a rich football history. "It's a huge club in the north east and we have a fantastic following. Home and away, our fans are second to none." Let's hope he gets a good night's sleep between now and the end of the season ...

PETER MARTIN JOHNSON

Peter Martin Johnson is a leading firefighter with Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service and a leading activist in the campaign to save his local fire station at Blyth.

Keep Ashington in Ashington. Sign the petition at www.petitiononline.com/ashafc/petition.html

Quick Crossword

**ACROSS**

- 7** Oxygen may help you do this more easily (7)
- 8** Type of seal – but it doesn't roar! (3, 4)
- 10** Inventor of instrument measuring radioactivity (6)
- 11** Classical gigs at the Albert Hall (3, 5)
- 12** This is one! (4)
- 13** Method of betting by luck of the draw (10)
- 14** Not enthusiastically (11)
- 19** Debate, argument or conversation (10)
- 22** See 3 (4)
- 23** Injury often sustained in RTAs (8)
- 24** Do it after holiday or shopping (6)
- 25** R, as in MMR jab (7)
- 26** Decapitates (7)

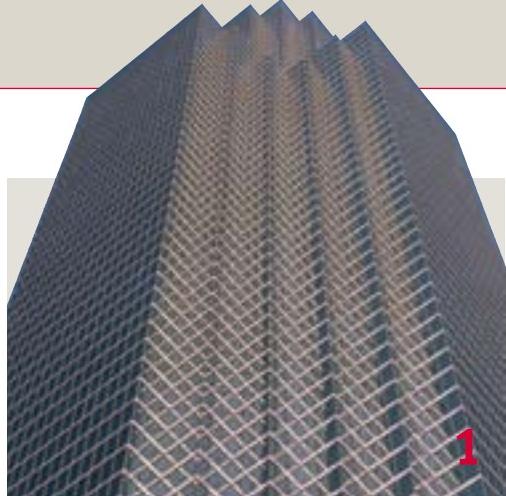
DOWN

- 1** Fashion in which to evacuate (7)
- 2** Condition of decay of body tissue (8)
- 3, 6, 17, 22** Proverb that all rumours have some foundation – not necessarily true for FBU members! (6, 2, 5, 7, 4)
- 4** Character who never grew up (5, 3)
- 5** Bordeaux wine, or blood (6)
- 6** See 3 (7)
- 9** Helps you see out of doors (6, 5)
- 15** Damaged, likely to topple (8)
- 16** Non-hereditary occupant of House of Lords (4, 4)
- 17** See 3 (7)
- 18** Go before (7)
- 20** Metal policeman? (6)
- 21** Sickness (6)



Solution
to March
crossword

Answers To March Quiz: 1. U2. 2. Bruce Springsteen. 3. Simply Red. 4. The Doors. 5. Red Hot Chilli Peppers. 6. Peter Gabriel



JOHN MEAD/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

Prize Quiz

Win a Vivitar minicam

Enter our prize quiz and it could be yours. This month, fire in film. Just name the six movies by solving the clues.

1 Steve McQueen, Paul Newman and Faye Dunaway starred in this 1974 disaster movie

2 1991 movie directed by Ron Howard and starring Kurt Russell and Robert de Niro as Chicago firefighters trying to find an arsonist before he strikes again

3 Starring Joaquin Phoenix, this 2004 film is about firefighters bonding in work and personal life

4 2004 TV series, now in its second series, starring Dennis Leary who plays Tommy Gavin, a New York firefighter trying to deal with the aftermath of 9/11, alcohol abuse and a failing marriage

5 2002 film starring Sigourney Weaver and Anthony LaPaglia as a fire captain who loses eight of his crew in the 9/11 tragedy and has to read their eulogies at their funerals

6 Starring in this 1968 film, John Wayne plays a macho oil well fighting firefighter whose character is supposedly based on Red Adair



ABACUS/EMPICS



CANADA PRESS/EMPICS

HOW TO ENTER

Send your answers to the prize quiz on a postcard to: Prize Competition (April 2006) FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston Upon Thames KT2 7AE. Include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries. Competition closes April 30.



StationCat

... brings you the news they don't want you to hear

CFOA solidarity

A prominent chief fire officer showed remarkable restraint when he was named and pictured in the *Mail on Sunday* attending an England rugby match at Twickenham courtesy of 02. The content of the story is of no interest to me, but I can reveal it gave rise to one of the very few instances of what is sometimes known – ironically it must be said – as "Chief Fire Officers Association solidarity". On this occasion CFOA solidarity actually meant something. The named and pictured chief took the brunt of the tabloid onslaught on his own.

Not once did he mention that he was not the only chief fire officer who was at the match and pictured in the same 02 enclosure. Some unpublished snaps of the match – which have fallen into my paws – show another chief officer very clearly pictured in the 02 section standing in his white t-shirt and dark coat watching the game. Station Cat would like to hear some evidence that at least one drink has been exchanged between these two chief fire officers in appreciation of one of them taking the knocks on his own.

HR brigade

Personnel Today has been boasting about how a "new breed" of human resource manager is taking over the fire service. It gives no clues as to what this cross-breed may be. *PT* quotes one HR manager, Peter Brook of Greater Manchester, who claims: "HR professionals are in the vanguard of change at the fire service and are undoubtedly helping to usher in some important reforms. We have introduced many changes to the service in the past few months and have had to walk through an industrial relations minefield to do so." One of these was the issue of "beds". But this has proved as much of a public relations minefield as an industrial one as someone leaked one of these "important reforms" to the media.



Faces have been obscured to protect them!

GMC got rid of beds and, at a cost not a million miles from £250,000, installed standard domestic reclining chairs. They then produced a four-page manual on how to use them coupled with staff training before they could be used. The training for the chair is classed as 'Category 1 training', the same category as BA, rescue training, and life support training. The manual for chairs is nearly the same size as the operator's manual for ALP/HPV. The chair's training manual warns: "Only personnel who have been instructed in the use of the Calcot reclining chair are allowed to use them." It also explains how to clean up a drink spillage: "Tissue should firstly be placed on stain to absorb excess liquid."

All this detail from a brigade in which retained firefighter Paul Metcalfe drowned when he went into a freezing pond to rescue a child with no training or equipment, the subject of a failed HSE prosecution last year. **Paul died because he had less training than GMC are now offering for the use of standard domestic reclining chairs.** The vanguard of change claims it understands the essence of "modernisation", but seem to think they can find it in IKEA.

What does HRP mean?

Since the *Personnel Today* article Station Cat has been given more examples demonstrating how highly functioning HR is within the fire service.

Some point out wide staffing disparities between the HR empires with London boasting one HR person for every 56 operational staff while GMC has one for every 86 operational staff.

Others claim that HRP does not stand for Human Resources Professional as they claim but for Horizontal Resting Platform. Devon Fire and Rescue Service was where "beds had to go" because of the never ending "need to modernise". **Like Manchester, they first went for reclining chairs until a chiropractor's report raised fears of these leading to back injuries.**

Beds and reclining chairs have now been dropped in favour of proposals for "Horizontal Resting Platforms" which are "more in keeping with the needs of the modern fire service".

So next time someone tells you they are an HRP feel free to sit down on them until you feel fully refreshed and rested.

Danger FBU

More private documents reach me expressing NO DPM concerns about the FireControl "Governance, Funding and Human Resources Implications" paper doing the rounds.

It suggests the need to put "contingency planning in place as there is a danger of FBU having access to the paper which could incur implications."

When we leaked the FireControl Outline Business Case NO DPM bogs panicked and called in MI5 to check to see if the union had broken the Government's encryption codes on the electronic document. **After an investigation, MI5 assured them this could not possibly have happened (at least that was what it said in the secret report).**

Better put those contingency plans in place though.

→ If you have any snippets you think Station Cat should get his sharp claws into then e-mail: stationcat@fbu.org.uk

25-year badges



Stephen Wolstenholmes (left) being presented with his 25 year badge by Richard Cluderay, Idle Fire Station



Officer John Smyth (left) being presented with his 25 year badge by Dermot Rooney Regional Official, Northern Ireland



Back row (l-r) Steve Watson presents 25 year badges to **Ron Carr, Ray Riaz, Alan Phillips**, front row **Dave Parry and Keith Middleton** of Middlesbrough



Fife member Derek Lowe (right) being presented with his 25 year badge by **Alex Kinnear**, Fife FBU Brigade Chair



Lincs Brigade Chair Jim Curry presenting **John Taylor Lincs Officers rep** (left) with his 25 year FBU badge



Raymond [Archie] Fleming (left), Crescent Link Branch, receives his 25 year badge from **Regional Secretary Tony Maguire**



Area Commander Eoin Doyle (left), Western Area, receives his 25 year badge from **EC member Jim Barbour**



Noel Johnston (left) Crescent Link Branch, receives his 25 year badge from **Regional Secretary Tony Maguire**



Alan [Beano] Simpson (left), Crescent Link Branch, receives his 25 year badge from **EC member Jim Barbour**

Please send your photographic prints or digital picture files to: Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE or firefighter@fbu.org.uk (Please note that inkjet prints from digital pictures reproduce very poorly). Please include FULL DETAILS for every picture – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where and when it was taken.



Harry Steele (left), Crescent Link Branch, receives his 25 year badge from **R2 EC member Jim Barbour**



Ralph Hamilton (left), Crescent Link Branch, receives his 25 year badge from **EC member Jim Barbour**

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR NEXT OF KIN

Advise your Brigade Membership Secretary of any change of address and Head Office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE 0808 100 6061

The line provides advice for personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues. For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.

